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ABSTRACT

This document evolved because studies concerning sex role socialization patterns were available from only a limited number of societies. In addition to examining available research findings, the author develops a number of relevant hypotheses with respect to several selected societies--the United States, Russia, Greece, India, and Eastern Europe. These hypotheses are: (1) equalitarian ideologies superimposed by the state may increase the range of women's educational and occupational options but may have little effect on sex role socialization and the degree of sex stereotyping; (2) same-sex play groups that provide girls with competitive experiences as well as acceptance and prestige for winning and/or mixed-sex friendship groups that replace dating, singly or in combination, can enable girls to develop intellectually and to achieve highly without fear of loss of femininity and popularity; (3) in societies in which there are formalized institutionalized patterns of sex role socialization and sex discrimination, there is no need for informal indirect, and disguised sex discrimination. (Author/PC)

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SEX ROLE SOCIALIZATION PATTERNS IN SELECTED SOCIETIES

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Because studies concerning sex role socialization patterns are available from only a limited number of societies, in addition to examining available research findings we shall develop a number of relevant hypotheses with respect to some selected societies which deserve special interest. In examining available research findings or in formulating hypotheses concerning sex role socialization patterns and consequences for women's professional roles, it is important to delineate the core factors which might bring about changes in sex role socialization.

There is some evidence that the following types of major macro-sociological changes can bring about significant changes in at least some aspects of the status of women:

1. Major shifts in political ideologies that entail social equality as a basic principle and that specifically spell out equality between men and women. The Marxist and the Maoist socio-political ideologies are outstanding examples differentially interpreted and implemented in the U.S.S.R., the different Eastern European nations as well as in Cuba and China.

2. Major ideological changes expressed through some kind of a social movement such as, the Women's Liberation Movement in the United States or the Sex Role Debate in Scandinavian nations.

3. Crises, especially those creating manpower shortages such as, wars, nationalist uprisings, revolutions, and guerrilla warfare (Lipman-Blumer, 1973). With the exceptions of wars, women are usually allowed

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to actively participate in nationalist uprisings, revolutions, and guerrilla warfare especially when the risks are quite high and everyone willing to fight and die represents a valuable resource. In addition, the longer such crises last and the more men become involved, the more acute the manpower shortages become in many vital positions and occupations that must be filled, if the society is to continue functioning. And, hence, women are usually increasingly allowed to fill them.

Let us now examine what types of and to what extent changes in some aspects of the status of women occur as a result of the stimulus factors presented and how these changes are or may be linked to changes in sex role socialization patterns. First, in the U.S.S.R. and the Eastern European nations, about which considerable evidence is available, all indications show that women's educational and occupational options spread over a much wider range than is true for most other societies (Finland being an outstanding exception) (Dodge, 1966; Safilios-Rothschild, 1971; Sullerot, 1971; Barker, 1972). However, there is also a concensus that the widening of women's educational and occupational options is not related to women's greater chances for occupational upward mobility, especially to top prestigious, power-vested, or decision-making positions (Sokolowska, 1965; Barker, 1972; Alzon, 1973). And there has been no redefinition of men's and women's roles in the family and the society so that women, even when they work in the same occupations as their husbands, have the responsibility for housework and child care (Barker, 1972; Alzon, 1973; Safilios-Rothschild, 1974). In fact, Russian women

spend, after work, on the average 2.5-4 hours per day in housework and child care and 5 hours on Sunday, working at home 3 times as much as their husbands who enjoy twice as much leisure time as their wives (Barker, 1972; Alzon, 1973). Actually, for some categories of women (such as night shift workers) sleep becomes the most rare commodity (Barker, 1972) and physical exhaustion is reported to plague all women.

While there are no specific research studies on sex role socialization in the U.S.S.R. or any of the Eastern European nations, it is possible to hypothesize about children's socialization messages. Children in these societies are exposed to different sex stratification systems than the one prevailing in the United States. While here children perceive that within each class there is a sex stratification system, the differences between men's and women's individual (and not derived*) access to income, prestige, and power become wider in the middle and upper middle class; children in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern European societies probably perceive a more uniform picture of a meshed social and sex stratification system : women occupy sizeable portions of the lower and lower middle strata, while men overwhelmingly dominate the higher strata. How does the significant breakdown of sex-differentiation in educational and occupational choices affect boys' and girls' sex role conceptions? And in the absence of masculine and feminine occupations,

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* It must be clarified here that we are consistently talking about women's individually achieved position in stratification systems rather than the position in which they may be classified on the basis of their derived status through their husband's achievements.

to what do boys and girls attribute the perceived social inequalities based on sex? And how do boys and girls evaluate men and women, when they are exposed to and socialized by mothers who not only can do whatever their father can in terms of occupation and knowledge but in addition make their lives comfortable and provide for all their needs? Is women's self-esteem in these societies much higher than that of American women? And do men evaluate men and women equally? Much exciting research awaits to be carried out in this area.

Second, several societies have been affected by organized ideologies directly aiming to change the status of women, either expressed through social movements, such as in the United States, England, Holland, Canada, Australia or through milder discussions leading to social policy, such as the Sex Role Debate in the Scandinavian countries. A distinctive feature of these ideologies loosely referred to as the Women's Liberation ideology has been the goal of not only widening women's educational and occupational options and equalizing access to, and treatment of women in education and employment but also the redefinition of the roles of men and women and the change of woman-to-woman and man-to-woman interpersonal relations. Because of this equal emphasis on redefinition of men's and women's roles and on the eradication of internalized sex role stereotypes that act as psychological barriers, efforts have been made to break down the social structural as well as the psychological, internalized barriers to sex equality. Thus, some social policy, legislation, and social pressure has aimed in order to diminish the degree of sex-differentiation in boys' and girls' socialization experiences in school, in readings,

in media, etc. Such efforts have been more systematic and long-lasting in Sweden where since 1962, girls and boys are required to take the same courses in the elementary school so that boys must take cooking, sewing and child care, and girls must take manual handicrafts and other "masculine" subjects (Linner, 1971). Elementary school textbooks free of sexism were already available and used in the late 60's. In addition, legislative changes such as the normalization of part-time work for men and women, the transformation of maternity leaves into paid six month parental leaves that can be taken in any portion by fathers or mothers, and the availability of 21 days of paid leave per year to fathers and mothers to enable them to stay home and take care of sick children, have all contributed to a partial redefinition of Swedish men's and women's roles (Safilios-Rothschild, 1974). Thus, already in 1969, 11 percent of fathers in Gothenburg were reported as having stayed home to take care of a sick child and 72 percent of the Swedish husbands shared the responsibility of "washing up" with their wives, 66 percent shared the responsibility of cooking, and 63 percent shared cleaning (Woman in Sweden in the Light of Statistics, 1971).

In the light of the above changes in at least some of the school socialization experiences of boys and girls and in the role models provided by mothers and fathers with regard to division of labor and responsibility in the family, it could be expected that young Swedish children would have less sex role stereotypes than older children who have benefitted less from recent changes. A study, however, conducted in 1969 in Uppsala reports that boys and girls aged 5, 8, 11 and 15 were equally

aware of and influenced by sex role stereotypes, while girls were aware earlier and to a greater extent than boys (Dahl, 1969). Another recent study showed that despite many structural changes, mothers still hold a double standard in their expectations of boys and girls. Thus, they tend to be much more tolerant of boys' rulebreaking and deviant behavior while they expect girls to conform to rules and social conventions much more than boys ("Some Data on Sex Role Socialization in Sweden", 1975). Interestly enough the father's role was confined to playing with children, to consoling them and to taking care of them in the night.

Thus, it seems that even when structural changes directly affect the sex role socialization patterns, the socialization outcome is not immediately modified and the extent of sex role stereotyping not reduced. Most probably when the Swedish children who are present are 5-10 years old will have children and a greater variety of structural changes in this area will have come about, the sex role socialization patterns may be more profoundly affected and the socialization outcome more markedly different.

Third, in examining societies which have undergone wars as crises involving manpower shortages, Lipman-Blumen's (1973) research has already established for several societies that a de-differentiation process takes place that provides women with a greater range of occupational and political options. This higher degree of women's participation in employment, different occupations, and politics during wars, tends to diminish after the crisis is over but the leveling-off point is usually higher than it

was before the onset of the crisis (Lipman-Blumen, 1973). The available data from Greece agree with Lipman-Blumen's data from the United States and England.

Before 1939, Greece was a traditional, rural, Mediterranean society resembling the Middle Eastern and North African Arab societies in terms of social structure as well as prevailing values and attitudes, especially those pertaining to the dominant cultural value of honor. The status of women was quite low in all respects, illiteracy rates for women being high, paid employment rare, birth rates high, no political rights for women, and the honor code so restrictive that women were altogether deprived of freedom, including that of physical mobility unless in the company of older women, husband, father, or brother. From 1939 through 1949 an uninterrupted chain of crises took place in Greece: the Italian War; the Italian and then the German occupation and the underground guerrilla warfare; and the communist uprising right after the end of the Second World War and the ensuing long civil war up to 1949. Throughout this decade, women increasingly played an active role in fighting, particularly in the underground guerrilla warfare and the civil war, both extremely risky and uncertain warfare activities. During this decade of crisis in which women were equally involved with men in secret organizations and guerrilla warfare groups and were risking their lives as frequently, these and other women not directly involved were increasingly allowed to enroll in masculine fields, to take positions never before open to women, and to enjoy more freedom , including more sexual freedom. Probably due to the extended duration of

the accumulated crises, the de-differentiation process involved permanent structural changes that persisted and evolved after the end of the crises. Thus, beginning with 1950 when national statistics became again available, birth rates had drastically declined and continued to decline slowly but steadily throughout the 50's and 60's. The rate of illiteracy diminished drastically; women increasingly entered masculine occupations; abortion, although illegal, was practiced widely, safely, and at a low cost by all reputable physicians; and the practice of "surgical virginity" indicated that premarital sex had spread to rural and traditional urban girls who were still concerned about maintaining the facade of virginity (Safilios-Rothschild, 1969).

While all these changes are well documented and could be attributed to the long-term de-differentiation processes during the decade of crises, it is difficult to assess the extent and the linkages by which these changes affect the sex role socialization patterns. One clear-cut direct linkage can be found in the decreased birth rates resulting in a considerable number of one-girl families (or two-girl families), especially in the middle and upper middle classes in Athens and the urban areas (in which the average number of children is 1.2). In the case of one-girl families, the girl is socialized to high achievement through her parents' high educational and occupational expectations as well as through continuous encouragement and support. These girls are expected to carry the family name (which they literally do by means of hyphenated names after marriage) and are socialized without much regard to sex role stereotypes, at least in the area of achievement (Safilios-Rothschild, 1972, p. 32).

They are not only free but they are encouraged to enter high prestige and high paying occupations that will assure them of a higher social position, but no information is available as to whether their freedom from sex role stereotypes in this area is accompanied by similar freedom from sex role stereotypes in other life sectors.

On the other hand, some socialization experiences of Greek girls that cannot be attributed to the decade of crises are of crucial importance for the development of high self-esteem, the freedom to achieve and to develop themselves without mirroring the desirability of their choices in their popularity among boys. The play patterns of urban middle and upper middle class girls between the ages of 8-13 or 14 reveal the existence of same-sex, well organized groups which meet regularly in a park or a street to play a variety of competitive games with another similar group of girls. Winning in these games carries individual and collective prestige and may lead to a leadership position within the group; hence, competition is usually fierce. The important features of these play groups are that: (a) girls are competitive, aggressive, and fight for prestige and leadership; (b) during these years girls are totally uninterested in boys whom they find boring and a nuisance, thus resembling the adolescent psychology of American boys vis-a-vis girls; and (c) they have high esteem for the winners and the leaders which most probably facilitates in turn the development of high self-esteem, especially when successful and well-liked in the all-girl group.

This play stage is followed by a stage during which girls become slowly interested in boys, not romantically but as companions with whom to go out socially. This social outing does not, however, take the form

of dyadic dating. Instead, a parea is formed, that is a group of boys and girls who do things together like: going to parties, to the movies, to the theater, and so on. There is no pairing between individual boys and girls and in fact such pairing is strictly tabooed. If it would occur, the couple would be teased and laughed at and forced to withdraw from the parea. This type of group friendship persists through high school and goes on throughout college, although the composition of a parea may change, or the individual may shift from one parea to another. The existence of a parea in these girls' lives from the time they are 15-16 years old is of great significance since it provides them with a variety of friendly and congenial boys to dance with, to talk with, to try out thoughts on, to go out with, -- of course, always in a group with other girls. The boys in the parea provide them with acceptance and security that prevents them from competing with other girls for the attention of and acceptance by a boy; instead they share with other girls a number of boys. Thus, they do not have to mold their personalities to please and flatter the boys; on the contrary, boys and girls have a chance within the context of the parea to get to know each other and accept each other as they are. Because they get to know and like each other, occasionally a boy and girl who belonged to the same parea for many years start dating each other in their early 20's, but always outside the context of the parea.

It can be hypothesized that the Greek institution of parea allows a girl to achieve highly in school (the public high school being sex-segregated) without feeling anxious that she may be less popular among boys and, therefore enjoy less social life, because of her scholastic success. Fun, assocation with interesting boys, and social life are guaranteed through the parea regardless of the girl's

intelligence or scholastic success. As a matter of fact, intelligent girls usually have a higher status in a parea than less intelligent ones. Thus, girls are encouraged to develop their intelligence and knowledge in order to be admired instead of "playing dumb" in exchange for popularity.

It is interesting to note that an Indian study of the friendship patterns and the social club participation of adolescent boys and girls in Calcutta shows that boys in general and upper middle class girls belong more often to social clubs rather than dyadic friendships. Social clubs in India serve about the same social functions that the structured games and parea described above serve for Greek boys and girls. Thus, it was found that the Indian boys and upper middle class girls who joined the social clubs and interact within this context with youngsters of their age are socialized into competitive and coordinated group action as well as into leadership. It is not surprising, therefore, that the proportion of girls "who enter occupations, particularly those requiring universalistic and achievement-oriented dispositions, appears to be related directly to participation in age groups" rather than in dyadic friendships (Higdon Beech, 1972).

Much more cross-cultural research is needed on the various play activities as well as the variety of avenues for social contacts between boys and girls outside of dating and their consequences for girls' ability to achieve and to make marital, educational and occupational choices.

Finally, let us consider the case of societies in which no ideological, political, or structural factors have stimulated changes in the status of women and which are characterized by a more or less rigid social stratification system. Most of the Arab societies fall in this category, with the

possible partial exception of Tunisia where some changes were introduced by the Government during the last decade.

In these societies, women's social inferiority is considered "natural" and inescapable and a rigid sex stratification system is based upon religious and moral ideologies as well as "natural laws." In this societal context, sex role socialization practices and processes are openly and clearly aiming to teach boys that they are the dominant, important people and to teach girls subjugation to men. There are no ambiguities and no questions as to who occupies what position in the sex stratification system and the message passed on to girls is also clear: there is no way to escape or to rebel against the system; they are entirely powerless. Girls are effectively socialized into the inferior role by observing their mothers cry and their fathers become angry at their mothers for having borne a girl instead of a boy; they are bossed by their brothers (regardless of their age) and even beaten by them without their parents interfering; they are unequally treated with regard to food since the best is given to boys and when there is not enough food, girls are the ones who are left hungry; they cannot but note that all women around them have to obey men, are afraid of men, and are often mistreated by men. In addition, girls are clearly and openly told that they are not important since they are only girls and that they cannot do many things because they are girls.

Because the sex role socialization practices and processes are so clear and powerful, most girls accept their inferior position and do not challenge men's domination. Therefore, while there is blatant

institutional sex discrimination, we can hypothesize that the great variety of indirect, informal, and disguised sex discrimination practices present in the United States and Scandinavian societies does not exist because in fact there is no need for them. In the absence of informal sex discrimination it may be hypothesized that girls who manage to escape the oppressive sex role socialization can achieve highly with few obstacles in their way, especially since institutional barriers in developing societies can be lifted on the basis of particularistic criteria. There is actually evidence that upper and upper middle class girls escape the oppressive sex role socialization because their high social status makes them valuable people and the same holds true for exceptionally intelligent or otherwise gifted girls from other social classes who often come to be recognized as such by their parents and teachers. Research, however, is needed to indicate by what mechanisms and dynamics these girls escape the oppressive sex role socialization and what aspects of this socialization they may not be able to escape.

It is evident that there is a great research gap in the area of cross-cultural studies of sex role socialization.

Hopefully, the following hypotheses around which some evidence was presented in this paper will stimulate extensive research in different types of societies:

1. Egalitarian ideologies superimposed by the state may increase the range of women's educational and occupational options but can have

little effect on sex role socialization and the degree of sex stereotyping. Sex role socialization processes and the definition of men's and women's roles are hypothesized to be more affected by sex role ideologies expressed as social movements, although tangible changes may require 2-3 generations.

2. Same-sex play groups that provide girls with competitive experiences as well as acceptance and prestige for winning and/or mixed-sex friendship groups (in adolescence and early adulthood) that replace dating, singly or in combination are hypothesized to enable girls to develop intellectually and to achieve highly without fear of loss of femininity and popularity.

3. In societies in which there are formalized institutionalized patterns of sex role socialization and sex discrimination, there is no need for informal, indirect, and disguised sex discrimination. Consequently, those girls who manage to escape the sex role constraints transmitted through socialization, can achieve highly and occupy important positions by being treated as exceptional cases.

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